

June 7, 2006

Dear Licensees and Other Interested Parties:

Challenges continue to face Virginia optometrists; even so, every optometrist must be aware of and follow the current laws and regulations and adapt to the changes that occur. The Board, through its newsletter and website, regularly informs licensees of statute and regulation updates, answers commonly asked questions, and addresses other important issues as they arise. The Board's website: <http://www.dhp.virginia.gov/Optometry/> provides links to the statutes and regulations, guidance documents, newsletters, and a host of other useful information such as its "Frequently Asked Questions" section. For those without Internet access, please request a copy from the Board office.

This summer, two significant changes related to medication prescribing will occur. The Prescription Monitoring Program will expand significantly and medication prescription pad formats changes will go into effect. Virginia's Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) is designed to assist in deterring the illegitimate use of prescription drugs through its secured database on medication prescriptions. In response to serious problems with Oxycontin abuse, the program originated as a pilot project restricted to southwestern Virginia and Schedule II controlled substance prescriptions. Beginning in June of 2006, PMP expands to cover all of Virginia and Schedule II through IV controlled drugs. For details on this Department of Health Professions program, follow this link: http://www.dhp.virginia.gov/dhp_programs/pmp/pmp_laws.asp.

Medication prescription pad formats will be affected this summer by legislation passed in 2003. Beginning on July 1, 2006, checking an old "dispense as written" box will no longer prohibit generic substitution. For details on the format changes required and the reasons behind them follow the Board of Pharmacy's link to " Prescription Blank Requirements:" http://www.dhp.virginia.gov/Pharmacy/pharmacy_faq.htm#PresBlank

Professional designations continue to be a source of many questions. If you hold yourself out to the public by a name other than your own personal name, it must first be registered with the Board as a professional designation and renewed annually as long as you use it. If you intend to use a professional designation, make sure that you read, understand, and abide by the relevant statutes and regulations because the Board construes them strictly as written.

Finally, be aware that the Health Practitioners Intervention Program is available to assist optometrists suffering from substance abuse, addiction, and other impairments. If you know of a colleague who could benefit from this program contact the Board office or HPIP directly.

Sincerely yours,

David H. Hettler, O.D.

David H. Hettler, O.D.
President
Virginia Board of Optometry